AN

EXHORTATION

TO MUTUAL

Charity and Union

AMONG

PROTESTANTS.

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING and QUEEN

AT

HAMPTON-COURT,

MAY 21. 1689.

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UMI

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ROM. XV. 5, 6, 7.

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded *one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with* one mind, *and* one mouth, *glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Wherefore receive *ye one another, as Christ also* received *us, to the glory of God.*

THE Words are part of that affectionate Application, which the *Apostle* here makes of his excellent Discourse concerning the *Exercise of Christian Charity*, in that great Instance of *Condescention* to the *Infirmities* of our *Weaker Brethren*, in the foregoing *Chapter*. See ch. xiv. 1.

The *Occasion* of it was this:

There were in those first times, many among the *Jews*, who tho they were converted to the *Christian Faith*, yet still continued *zealous for the Law*; and not only carefully observed themselves all the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* of it, Acts xv. 1. ---xxi. 20.

but would also by any means impose upon all others also, the observance of them. And how earnest they were upon this account, and how much they hated the *Gentile Converts*, upon whom the *Apostles* did not *think fit to lay any such burden*, many Passages both in the *Acts*, and in St. *Paul's Epistles*, do sufficiently declare.

Acts xv. 19, —— 28. Gal. v. 1. &c.

But as in all other differences it seldom happens that the whole heat of the Controversie rests only on one side; so here, tho the *Jewish Converts* were both the first beginners of this Dispute, and the more zealous pursuers of it, yet neither were the *Gentile* Christians utterly without fault in it; but so *far stood fast in that liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free*, as not only to despise the weakness and ignorance of the others, but to be ready almost even to cut them off from their Communion.

Gal. v. 1. Rom. xi. 18. &c.

I need not say how dangerous such a Controversie as this might have proved, nor what a stop it might have put to the progress of *Christianity*, in those first beginnings of the *Gospel*. Great were the difficulties which the *Apostles* underwent on this occasion, whilst they endeavoured

deavoured so to menage themselves between these two Parties, as not only not to offend either, but, if it were possible, to bring them Both to such a temper with one another, that neither the *Gentile Convert* might despise the weakness of his *Judaizing* Brother; nor the *Jewish* Votary judge too severely of the Liberty of the *Gentile* Christian.

And this was the design of St. *Paul* in the *Chapter* before my *Text*. Where addressing himself, as indeed he seems to have done this whole *Epistle*, to the *Gentile Christians*; and whom, as having the truer Notion of their *Christian Liberty* as to this matter, he therefore calls the δυνατοι, the *strong in the Faith*: v. 1. He exhorts them in a most admirable Discourse on this Subject throughout that whole *Chapter*, *to bear the Infirmities of the Weak*; i. e. not to grieve nor despise them for their mistaken Zeal, but by complying a little, and condescending to their Infirmities, to endeavour, if it should please God, to draw them out of their Error. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* And then concludes all in the words of the *Text*, wherein we have,

Rom. xv. 1.

Ibid.

Verse 2.

First, A hearty *Prayer* to God Almighty, That he would inſpire them ſo effectually with a Spirit of *Unity* and *Charity*, that notwithſtanding all their differences, they might join unanimouſly, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, not only in the ſame *common Worſhip of God*, but with the ſame *hearty affection* to one another:

Now the God of patience and conſolation, grant you to be like-minded *one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus; that ye may with* one Mind *and* one Mouth *glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

And *ſecondly*, An *Exhortation*, as the final reſult of his whole *Diſcourſe*, That they ſhould with all *charitable condeſcention* and *kindneſs receive*, and *love*, and *aſſiſt* one another, and not *deſpiſe*, and *cenſure*, and *deprive* one another, either of their *Charity*, or their *Communion*;

Wherefore receive *ye one another, as Chriſt alſo* received *us, to the Glory of God.*

In which *words*, as they thus lie before us in the Occaſion and Deſign of them, there are two things that will offer themſelves to our conſideration.

First, An *Exhortation* to theſe *Diſſenting Chriſtians*, and in them to all of us, Not to break either *Charity* or *Communion* with one another, upon the account of ſuch things wherein we may ſecurely differ; but mutually to *bear* with one another in our *differences*.

Secondly, An *Enforcement* of this *Exhortation*, from two of the greateſt Conſiderations that can poſſibly engage any Chriſtian to an obſervance of it; *viz.* See *Theodoret*, *Chryſoſt.* *Theophylact*, &c. in loc.

First, From the *Example of Chriſt* towards us.

Secondly, From the greater *Glory* that will hereby redound to *God*.

Wherefore receive *ye one another*, *as Chriſt alſo* received *us*, *to the Glory of God*.

I ſhall make it my endeavour with all the plaineſs that I can, to purſue both the *Exhortation* and the *Enforcement* in the three following *Propoſitions*.

I. That there may be *differences* in matters of leſſer moment, between very good and zealous Chriſtians, without any juſt reflection either upon the *Men*, or upon their *Religion*.

II. That

II. That these *differences* ought not to hinder such persons from agreeing together, not only in a *common Charity*, but, if it be possible, in a *common Worship* of *God* too.

III. That to this End it is the Duty of all *Christians*, but especially of those who are the *strong in Faith*, not only to pray for such a *Union*, but, as they have opportunity, heartily to labour Themselves, and earnestly to stir up all Others, to endeavour after it.

Prop. 1. And *first*; *That there may be* Differences *in matters of lesser moment between very good and zealous Christians, without any just reflection upon the* Men, *or upon their* Religion.

For proof of which, I think I need go no farther than the very History of my *Text*. I have already said how great a division there was between the *Jewish* and the *Gentile* Converts, about the *Ritual Observances* of the *Law* of *Moses*, and with what a Zeal the *Dissenting Parties* managed the Dispute, till they had almost lost their *Charity*, and made a deplorable *Schism* in the *Church of Christ*. And yet I am confident

ſident no man will ſay that this was at all derogatory either to the *Truth* of their *common Chriſtianity*, or to the *Infallible Authority* with which the *Apoſtles* had deliver'd it unto them.

And for the *Parties* themſelves that thus differ'd with one another, that they had a true *Zeal* on both ſides for the *Glory of God*, and thought it matter of *Conſcience*, the one to *obſerve* theſe *Ceremonial Inſtitutions* as what God ſtill required of them; the other to *refuſe* any ſuch *Impoſition*, as not only a needleſs Burden, but even repugnant to the *Grace of Chriſt* declared to them in his *Goſpel*; St. *Paul*, in the proſecution of this very Argument, does clearly bear witneſs to them, Ch. xiv. 6. Where he makes uſe of this very thing as one Reaſon why they ſhould mutually toletate one another in their *Diſſentions*; *viz.* That however they *differ'd* in their *Notions* as to *theſe particulars*, yet they were both perfectly agreed in the ſame common *Zeal* for the *Glory of God*, and the *diſcharge* of their *Duty*. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth*

Acts xv. 28. Gal. v. 2.

Rom. xiv. 6.

veth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

And indeed, either we muſt ſay, that all, even the leaſt *Points*, relating to our *Religion*, are ſo clearly and plainly revealed, that no Honeſt man can poſſibly be miſtaken if he will but impartially enquire into them; which from the *Differences* of whole *Parties* concerning theſe things, 'tis plain they are not: Or elſe mens different Capacities, and Opportunities, and Tempers, and Education conſider'd, 'tis in vain to expect that all Good men ſhould agree in all their *Notions* of *Religion*, any more than we ſee they do in any other concerns whatſoever. And who am I that I ſhould dare to pronounce a ſentence of *Reprobation* againſt any one, in whom there appear all the other *Characters* of an humble, upright, ſincere Chriſtian, only becauſe he has not perhaps met with the ſame Inſtruction, or Read the ſame Books, or do's not Argue the ſame way; In a word, becauſe he is not ſo wiſe, or it may be, is wiſer than I am, and ſees farther than I do, and therefore is not exactly of my Opinion in every thing?

Now

Now if this be ſo, as both the *Principles* of *Reaſon* conclude it very well may be, and the common *Experience* of Mankind, not only in the particular concern of *Religion*, but in moſt other things aſſures us that it is: That mens Underſtandings are different, and they will argue different ways, and entertain different Opinions from one another, about the ſame things, and yet may nevertheleſs deſerve on all ſides, to be eſteemed very good and wiſe men for all that: How vain then muſt that *Argument* be, which a Late *Author* of the *Church* of *Rome*, has with ſo much Pomp reviv'd againſt us, from our Differences in a few *leſſer Points* of our *Religion*, to conclude us to be *Erroneous* in the *greater*; and that becauſe we are not exactly of the *ſame Opinion* in *every thing*, that therefore we ought to be *credited* in *nothing*; that is to ſay, That becauſe *Proteſtants* when they *differ*, are miſtaken on *One Side*, therefore when they *agree*, they are miſtaken on *Both*?

Hiſtoire des variations *des Egliſes Proteſtantes: par Mr. l'Eveſque de* MEAUX.

The deſign of which, may be ſeen in the Summary of his Preface —— *Les Variations dans la foy preuve certaine de fauſſeté.* —— *Caractere des hereſies d'eſtre variables.* —— *Ce Caractere reconnu dans tous les Ages de l'Egliſe.* —— *Caractere d'immutabilité dans la foy de l'Egliſe Catholique.* —— *Que les variations de l'un des partis (de Proteſtans) eſt une preuve contre l'Autre*, &c.

1*ſt*. It is certain that amidſt all our other *Diviſions*, we are yet on all ſides agreed in whatſoever is *Fundamental* in the *Faith*, or *neceſſary* to be *believed* and *profeſſed* by us in order to our *Salvation*.

There is no good *Proteſtant*, but what does firmly believe all the *Articles* of the *Apoſtles Creed*; and embraces the *Holy Scriptures* as the *Word of God*, and *Rule of his Faith*, and readily acknowledges whatſoever is *plainly revealed* therein, and is at all times diſpoſed to ſubmit to any thing that can by any *neceſſary* and *certain Conſequence* be *proved* to him thereby. In ſhort, Our *Differences*, whatſoever they are, I will be bold to ſay they do no more, nor even ſo much concern the *foundations* of *Chriſtianity*, as thoſe of the *Judaizing Chriſtians* here did. If their *differing* therefore with one another, was no prejudice to the Truth of their *common Chriſtianity* then, I would fain know for what reaſon our *Differences*, which are leſſer, ſhall become ſo much a greater Argument againſt our *common Chriſtianity* now. But,

2*dly*, If our differing from one another in *ſome Points*, be an *Argument* that we are not *certain*

him in any; How ſhall we be ſure that thoſe of the *Church* of *Rome* are not altogether as *uncertain* as we are; ſeeing we are ſure that they do no leſs *differ* among themſelves, and that in *Points* too, much more conſiderable than we do?

For to take only one Inſtance inſtead of many, and that ſo conſiderable, that Card. *Bellarmin* once thought the *Sum of Chriſtianity*, he meant the *Sum of Popery*, to conſiſt in it, *viz.* The *Prerogatives* of the *Biſhop* of *Rome*, both in and over the *Church of Chriſt*. * Some there are who hold the *Pope* to be *Head* of the *Church*, by *Divine Right*: Others the *contrary*. * Some, That he is *Infallible*: Others, That he is not. * Some, That the *Pope alone*, without a *Council*, may determine all *Controverſies*: Others, That he *cannot*. Now if in theſe, and many other *points* of no leſs importance, they themſelves are as far from *agreeing* with One another, as they can poſſibly pretend us to be; what ſhall hinder us, but that we return their own *Inference* upon them, That ſeeing they *differ* among themſelves in ſuch things as theſe, they are ſo far from that *abſolute Infallibility* they ſet up for, that in truth they have not ſo much as

Præf. ad lib. de Summ. P. T. 1. p. 592. Ingoldſtad. A. 1586.

any *certainty* among them, even in those *Points* wherein they do agree.

Is it that in their *Church*, tho there be indeed as many *differences* as in ours, yet this makes not against them, seeing they have a certain Rule, whenever they please, for the *composing* of them, *viz.* The *Definition* of the *Pope*, and of the *Church*? This, indeed, I find is commonly said by them: But then certainly, if they have such a *ready means*, as they say, of *Agreement* among them, 'tis the more shame for them, that they do not *agree*; he being much more inexcusably guilty in the omission of any duty, who having a *ready means* to fulfil it, neglects so to do, than he who has none, or (which is the same thing) does not know that he has any. But indeed they have no *means* of *Ending* their *differences*, any more than we have; The *Holy Scriptures* we both of us acknowledg to be the *Word of God*, and an *Infallible Rule of Faith*; but for any other direction, they are not yet agreed where to seek it: And sure that can be no very good *means* of *Ending* all their other *Differences*, which is its self one of their chiefest *Controversies*.

Bellarm to. 1. p. 1377. de Not. Eccl. A.

See Mr. *Chillingworth*, P. 99, 100.

Or

Or is it, That they *agree* in *matters* of *Faith*, and *differ only in those things that do not belong to it?* Because if they *differ* about any Point, they for that very reason, conclude it to be *no matter of Faith.* But besides the Impertinence of this Answer, which amounts to no more than this, that they *do agree* in what they *do agree*, and *differ* only in those things in which they *differ*: This is what we say for our selves concerning our Differences; We agree in all those things that are necessary to a *Sound* and *Saving Faith*; and if we *differ* in matters of lesser moment, 'tis no more than what all other Christians have ever done, and what those of the *Church of Rome* its self at this day do. Bellarm. ib. p. 1378. B.

So that still it must remain, either that those *Differences* which were among the *Christians* of old, and which are among us now, are no *prejudice* at all to the *common Faith* which we profess; or if they be, the Consequence will fall upon those of the *Church of Rome* no less, that do not say, and more severely, than upon us, and be of the same Force against *Their Religion*, that it can be against *Ours*.

But I must carry this *Reflection* a great deal further; for,

3*dly*. If

3*dly*. If once this *Principle* be allowed, That becauſe men differ in ſome things, they ought not to be credited in any, what then will become, not only of the *Proteſtant Religion*, as it now ſtands in Oppoſition to *Popery*, but even of *Chriſtianity* its ſelf? For might not a *Turk* or a *Jew*, if he were minded to give himſelf ſo much trouble to ſo little purpoſe as this late *Author* has done, draw out a large *HISTORY* of the *VARIATIONS* of *Chriſtians* among themſelves, from the Controverſie of the *Text*, unto this day; and then by the very ſame *Principle* conclude againſt us all, That we have none of us any certain Grounds for Our *Religion*, becauſe the *differences* that are among us, plainly ſhew, that ſome of us muſt be deceived? And to go yet one ſtep farther; Might not a *Sceptick* by the ſame *Rule*, argue againſt all *Religion*, and even againſt all *Reaſon* too; That the diſagreement of mankind in theſe and many other *Points* of the greateſt *Importance*, plainly ſhews there is no *certainty* in any *thing*; and therefore that we ought not to rely either upon the *one*, or upon the *other*?

It remains therefore, that unleſs we will overthrow all the meaſures of *Chriſtian Charity* towards

towards our *Neighbour*, and the *common Truth*, I do not ſay both of *their Faith* and of our own, but even of *Chriſtianity* its ſelf, nay and of all *Religion* and *Reaſon* in general; We muſt conclude, That good Chriſtians may *differ* from one another in matters of leſſer moment, without any *juſt Reflection* either upon *themſelves* or their *Religion*.

But here therefore I muſt deſire not to be miſunderſtood. For when I ſay, that Chriſtians may, without any danger to themſelves, or diſparagement to the Truth of their Religion, *differ* with one another; I mean only (as the *Terms* of my *Propoſition* expreſly ſhew) in *leſſer matters*; ſuch as do not concern the *Fundamentals* of *Faith*, nor deſtroy the *Worſhip* of *God*; nor are otherwiſe ſo *clearly revealed*, but that Wiſe and Good Men, after all their Enquiries, may ſtill continue to *differ* in their *Opinions* concerning them. For otherwiſe, if Intereſt and Prejudice blind mens eyes, and they *err* becauſe they reſolve they will not be convinced; and ſo by their own fault continue in miſtakes contrary to the *Foundation* of *Faith*, and deſtructive of *Piety*: If, for inſtance, Men will profeſs to believe but in *One God*, and yet

worſhip

worship Thousands; If they will read over the *second Commandment*, and nevertheless both *make* and *bow* down before *Graven Images* in despite of it; If, whilst they acknowledge *Christ* to have *instituted* the *Blessed Eucharist* in *both kinds*, they *command* it to be *administred* but in *One*; and *pray* in an *unknown Tongue*, tho St. *Paul* has spent almost a whole Chapter to shew the Folly and Unreasonableness of it: These are *Errors* in which I am not concerned; and tho I should be unwilling, even here, at all adventures to *pronounce* any *Sentence* against the *Men*; yet I must needs say, *that Religion* cannot be very sound, which stands *corrupted* with so many, and such *fundamental Abuses*.

And this makes the difference between those *Errors* for which we *separate* from the *Church of Rome*, and those *Controversies* which sometimes arise among *Protestants* themselves. The former are in matters of the greatest consequence, such as tend directly to destroy the *Integrity* of *Faith*, and the *Purity* of our *Worship*; and therefore such as are in their own nature *destructive* of the very *Essentials* of *Christianity*. Whereas our differences do not at all concern the *Foundations* either of *Faith* or *Worship*; and are therefore such

ſuch in which Good Men, if they be otherwiſe *diligent* and *ſincere* in their *Enquiry*, may *differ*, without any prejudice to themſelves, or any *juſt reflection* upon the *Truth* of their *common Profeſſion*.

Which being thus clear'd, in *anſwer* to the little Endeavours of one of the lateſt of our *Adverſaries* againſt us upon this Account; I go on, *Secondly*, to ſhew,

II. *That ſuch* differences *as theſe*, *ought not to* Prop. 2.
hinder ſuch perſons from agreeing together, *not only in a* common Charity, *but*, *if it be poſſible*, *in a* common Worſhip *of* God *too*.

This is what St. *Paul* here expreſly *exhorts* theſe *diſſenting Chriſtians* to, and earneſtly *prays* to *God* that he might ſee accompliſhed in them. That when they came together to the *publick Offices* of the Church, to offer up their *common Prayers* and *Thanksgivings* to Him, they might do it, not only in the *ſame form of words*, but with the *ſame affection of mind* too, both towards *God*, and towards *one another*: *Now the God of patience and conſolation*, *grant you to be* like-minded *one towards another*, *according to Chriſt Je-*

ſus; that ye may with one Mind *and* one Mouth *glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Such was their *Duty* to one another then; and we ought certainly no leſs to eſteem the ſame to be our Duty towards one another now: And

Firſt, As to the buſineſs of *Charity*;

God forbid that any *differences* in *Religion* whatſoever, much leſs ſuch little ones as thoſe we are now ſpeaking of, ſhould ever make us deny that to our fellow Chriſtians. 'Tis true indeed, our Saviour *Chriſt* once foretold to his *Diſciples*, That there ſhould riſe up Men from among their *Brethren*, who ſhould upon
John c. xvi. 2. this account not only *put them out of their Synagogues*, but even think that it was a matter of Religion to *kill them*. But they were *Jews*, not *Chriſtians*, who were to do this; and He expreſly adds, that 'twas their ignorance of Him and his Religion that ſhould carry them
----Verſe 3. on to ſo furious and intemperate a Zeal; *For theſe things*, ſays he, *ſhall they do unto you, becauſe they have not known the* Father *nor* Me. And we muſt confeſs it, to the ſcandal of our *Holy Religion*,

ligion, that there are a ſort of Men who call themſelves *Chriſtians* now, that ſtill continue to fulfil this *Prophecy* in the very Letter of it; who not only *caſt us out of their Synagogues*, *that* we ſhould not much complain of; and, as far as in them lies, cut us off from all the hopes of *Salvation* too; but, to compleat the parallel, openly arm the whole World againſt us, and teach Men to believe, that 'tis a Work of *Piety* to root us out of it; and therefore, that *whoſoever killeth us, does doGodſervice*. But in this, as well as in the reſt of their *Errors*, they give us but the more effectually to underſtand how little they have in them of the *true Spirit of Chriſtianity*; for ſure ſuch things as theſe they could never do, but only that, as our *Saviour* in that other *caſe* before ſaid, *they have not known the Father nor Him*. And I hope I ſhall need no Argument to perſwade you not to be miſled by that which we all of us ſo juſtly lament, as one of the moſt deplorable Corruptions even of *Popery* it ſelf.

Chriſtianity commands us to *love our Enemies*; and ſure then we cannot but think it very highly reaſonable not to *hate our Brethren*; but eſpe-

cially on ſuch an account, as, if it be once admitted, will in this *divided ſtate* of the *Church*, utterly drive the very name of *brotherly Love* and *Charity* out of it: ſeeing by whatever Arguments we ſhall go about to juſtifie our *uncharitableneſs* to any Others, they will all equally warrant them to with hold in like manner their *Charity* from us.

There is no honeſt, ſincere Chriſtian, how *erroneous* ſoever he may be, but what at leaſt is perſwaded that he is in the right; and looks upon Us to be as far from the Truth by differing from Him, as We eſteem Him for not agreeing with us. Now if upon the ſole account of ſuch differences it be lawful for us to *hate* Another; we muſt for the very ſame reaſon allow it to be as lawful for Him alſo to *hate* Us. Thus ſhall we at once invert the
Joh. 13.35. *Characteriſtick* of our Religion; *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have love one to another*; and turn it into the quite contrary *Note*; whilſt we make our *hatred* to our *Brother* the great mark of our *Zeal* for our *Religion*; and conclude him to *love Chriſt* the *moſt*, who the *leaſt loves his fellow Chriſtian*.

How

How much rather ought we to conſider, with our *Apoſtle*, the *love* of our dear *Maſter* to us, even whilſt we were yet his *Enemies*, and *love* thoſe whom we ought to hope, notwithſtanding all their *Errors*, are yet ſtill his *Friends*; and not think thoſe unworthy of our *Charity*, whom we piouſly preſume *God* will not think unworthy of his *Favour*? We ſuppoſe them to be miſtaken in thoſe things wherein they differ from us, and perhaps they are ſo; but yet we muſt conſider, that we our ſelves alſo are but Men, and therefore may err; and They as verily think Us in the wrong, as We do Them: And, for ought I know, we muſt leave it to the Day of Judgment to decide the Controverſie, which of us is in the right. In the mean time, if they are miſtaken, I am ſure our *uncharitableneſs* is not the way to convince them of their *Error*: but may rather indiſpoſe them to conſider the weight of our *Arguments* as they ought, whilſt they ſee ſo little regard in our *Affections* towards them. In ſhort, if we are indeed, what we eſteem our ſelves to be, *the ſtrong in the Faith*, let us then remember, that tho *Charity* be *their Duty* too as well as *ours*, yet 'tis to ſuch as We are, eſpecially, that St. *Paul* addreſſes the

Exhortation

Verſe 1. —7. *Exhortation* of the *Text*, *to bear the Infirmities of the weak*; and *to receive one another*, *as Chriſt alſo hath receiv'd us*, *to the Glory of God*. But,

2. Such *Differences* as theſe, ought not only not to leſſen our *Charity*, but, if it be poſſible, not to hinder us from joining together in the ſame common *Worſhip* of *God* with one another.

This was what theſe *diſſenting Chriſtians*, notwithſtanding all their Heats and Contentions, nevertheleſs ſtill continued to do. They did *with one Mouth glorifie God*, even when their differences would not ſuffer them to do it with *one Heart*. They united together in a *common Worſhip* of God, tho they could not unite either in Opinion or Affection with one another.

Indeed where mens *Errors* are ſuch as utterly do ſubvert the very *Eſſentials* of our *Religious Worſhip*, it is then in vain to hope for any *Communion* in the *Publick Service* of God with them. We muſt not deſtroy the *Principles* of *Chriſtianity*, out of a Zeal to enlarge the *Communion* of *Chriſtians*. He would be a very condeſcending Votary indeed, who for the ſake of

of *praying* to *God* with the *Papiſt*, would *pray* to the *Bleſſed Virgin* and *Saints* too with him: Who rather than be excluded their *Churches*, would *bow down* before their *Images*; and not only *worſhip* their *Hoſt*, but even give up his Right to the *Cup* in the *Euchariſt*, only that he might receive that Holy Sacrament in their Company. It is, no doubt, a very deſirable thing to *leſſen* the *differences* of *Chriſtians*, and enlarge their *Communion*, as far as ever we can: And it has never gone well with the Church of *Chriſt*, ſince men have been ſo narrow-ſpirited as to mix the *Controverſies* of *Faith*, with their *Publick Forms* of *Worſhip*; and have made their *Liturgies*, inſtead of being *Offices* of *Devotion to God*, become *Teſts* and *Cenſures* of the *Opinions* of their *Brethren*. But yet when all is done, the *Truths* of *Chriſtianity* muſt not be ſacrificed to the *Peace* of *Chriſtians*; nor the *Honour* of God be given up, to keep up a *Unity* and *Communion* with one another.

But where mens *Differences* are in *Points* that do not at all affect their *Religious Service*; or not ſo much, but that *God* may be very well *worſhipp'd*, and yet *Communion* with our *fellow Chriſtians* preſerved too; in ſuch caſes as this, our

our *diſſentions* ought not only not to leſſen our *Charity*, but not to break our *Unity* neither: We may continue to differ, as the *Chriſtians* in my Text did; and yet *with one Mind, and one Mouth, glorifie God*, as St. *Paul* exhorted them to do.

And this brings me to the *Third* and *Laſt Point*.

Prop. 3. III. *That to this End, it is the Duty of all of us, but eſpecially of the* ſtronger Chriſtians, *not only to* Pray *for ſuch a* Union, *but alſo, as they have opportunity, heartily to labour* themſelves, *and earneſtly to ſtir up all* others *to* endeavour *after it.*

I do not believe there is any *good Chriſtian* ſo little affected with thoſe unhappy Diviſions under which the *Church* at this day labours, as not both heartily to deplore them, and to think that nothing could be too much, that might innocently be done on all hands, for the redreſſing of them. But then I am ſure the natural Conſequence of this muſt be, what both my *Text*, and this *Diſcourſe* are deſigned to exhort you to; *viz.* That we ought every one of us, not only heartily to *pray* for ſuch a *Union*, but alſo

alſo, as we have opportunity, earneſtly to labour for the attainment of it.

Indeed for what concerns the whole Body of the *Catholick Church* on Earth, ſo many are the Diſputes that have ariſen among the ſeveral Parties and Communions of it, and ſome of them in *Points* ſo near to the Foundations of Chriſtianity, that whilſt Men reſolve to keep faſt to their Concluſions, and will not ſuffer the plaineſt Arguments to convince them of their *Errors*, 'tis in vain to hope ever to ſee things brought to ſuch a *Temper*, as we could wiſh in that. But eſpecially whilſt that part which is the moſt corrupt, is ſo far from being willing to concur to any ſuch *Union*, that on the contrary, ſhe has cut off all poſſibility of attaining it. And by arrogating an unwarrantable *Infallibility* to her ſelf, and *Authority* over all others, will neither *reform* her own *abuſes*, nor admit any into her *Communion*, that will not profeſs the ſame *Errors*, in which ſhe her ſelf ſtands involved. So that here, all we can even wiſh for, is, that Men would at laſt be ſo wiſe, as tho they differ in *Opinion*, yet to *love* as *Brethren*, and agree together in a *common Charity*,

till we ſhall be ſo happy as to *unite* in a *common Faith* and *Worſhip* of *God*.

But for us whom it has pleaſed *God*, by delivering us from the *Errors* and *Superſtitions* of the *Church of Rome*, to unite together in the common name of *Proteſtant*, *Reformed Chriſtians*, would we but as heartily labour after *Peace*, as we are all of us very highly exhorted to it; I cannot ſee why we who are ſo happily join'd together in a *common profeſſion of the ſame Faith*, at leaſt, I am ſure in all the *neceſſary points* of it; and I hope amidſt all our *leſſer differences*, in a *common love and charity to one another*, ſhould not alſo be united in the ſame *common Worſhip* of God too.

I will not now enter into any Diſpute, to ſhew how little reaſon there is for any one to *ſeparate* from the *Offices* of the *Church* of *England*, upon the account of thoſe few Exceptions that have ſometimes been offer'd to juſtifie the doing of it. This is a work both too large for ſuch a Diſcourſe; and beſides the deſign of my preſent Undertaking. And that one Conceſſion of many of our *Brethren* themſelves, who tho they continue *dividedly* to *ſeparate* from us, yet nevertheleſs

freely allow of what they call *Occasional Communion* with us, I think sufficiently shews how little real ground there is for those *Scruples*, that have so long detain'd them in an unjust aversion to our Worship. Blessed be *God*, who has abundantly justified both the Purity of our *Doctrine*, and the Innocency of our *Worship*, not only by the general Approbation of the *Reform'd Churches* abroad, who both freely *communicate* with us in our *religious Offices*, and have often given Testimony in favour of them; but in the happy Conviction of many at Home, who were once *Enemies* to our Constitution, but who now go with us into the same *House of God as Friends*.

And indeed the things for which some forsake us now, are no other than what they were in the *Beginning* of the *Reformation*; when yet there was no such thing as *Separation* from our *Communion*: But on the contrary, the old *Non-Conformists* themselves, tho they disliked some things in our *Worship*, yet freely declared they thought it a Crime to *divide* the *Church* upon the account of them. And they who at this day *separate* from us, for the sake of those few *Constitutions* that have been made for the *Order* and

Decency of our *Publick Worſhip*, muſt for the ſame reaſon have *ſeparated* from all the *Churches* of the *Chriſtian World*, for above 1500 Years; in none of which they might not have found as great, that I do not ſay, and much greater, occaſion of *Offence*, than they can in Ours.

But yet, ſince mens *Scruples* are unaccountable, and after all that can be ſaid, they will ſtill differ even about *indifferent* things, and be *afraid* many times, where *no Fear is*; and a too long Experience has already ſhewn us, That if ever we mean to accompliſh that *Union* ſo much recommended to us by our *Apoſtle*, ſo advantageous to the Church at all times, but eſpecially at this time ſo neceſſary to our Peace and our Eſtabliſhment, that it ſeems to be the only way that yet remains to ſettle and to ſecure us; and upon all theſe accounts ſo much to be deſired by all Good Men, we muſt ſeek it by that Rule which St. *Paul* here propoſed to the Diſſenting Chriſtians of my *Text*, *We*

Rom. xv. 1. *then that are ſtrong in the faith, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves.*

I cannot but think it a Reflection becoming every good Chriſtian among us, but in a more eſpecial manner, worthy the Conſideration of ſuch

such an *Auditory* as this, Whether somewhat may not yet be done for the sake of Peace, and to bring things to such a * TEMPER, that both *Order* and *Decency* may still be preserved, and yet our *Unity* no longer broken.

* See the *Petition* of the *Archbishop* and *Bishops* to King *James*, for which they were committed to the *Tower*.

And for *Exhortations* to so good and Christian a Work, shall I set before you the *Example* of our *Blessed Saviour* recommended to us in the *Text*, with what a mighty *condescention* he has treated Us; how He came down from Heaven, *and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and being made in the likeness of a sinful man, humbled Himself even to the Death upon the Cross for us*; How He still bears not only with our *Infirmities*, but with our *Sins* too; and by all these wonderful instances of his *Love* to us, teaches us, says St. *John*, *How we ought also to love one another?* Phil. ii. 6, 7. 1 Joh. iv. 11.

Or rather, shall I shew you, how far such a Blessed *Union* as this, would conduce to the *Glory* of *God*, to the *Security* of *our Religion*, and to the promotion of *Peace*, and *Charity*, and *Piety* among us?

I need not say what a dishonour our *Divisions* have

have already brought to the *Reformation*, not what a ſtop they have put to the *progreſs* of it. Great, to be ſure, is the *Advantage* which our *Enemies* either have, or at leaſt hoped to have made, by thoſe Conteſts which they have taken ſo much pains both to *bring in*, and to *keep up* among us: And methinks there ſhould need no other Argument to ſtir up every true Friend to the name of *Proteſtant*, to endeavour all he can to compoſe our *Differences*, than this one thing, That we are ſufficiently convinced who they are that we *pleaſe*, and whoſe *Intereſts* we ſerve, by the continuance of them.

Let us add to this, what great Obligations our Holy Religion lays upon us, to *follow after thoſe things that make for peace, and whereby we may edifie one another*: How our Saviour has ſet it down as the very Badge of our Diſcipleſhip; *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have love one to another*: What Exhortations his Apoſtles have given us; *If it be poſſible, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.* But eſpecially with reference to the differences about Religion, *To mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine which we have learnt, and avoid them.* With

Rom. xiv. 19.

Joh. xiii. 35.

Rom. xii. 18.

Rom. xvi. 17.

With what a ſcrupulous care did St. *Paul* manage himſelf between the *diſſenting parties* in my *Text*? What admirable *Rules* did he lay down for them to walk by? and with what an affectionate *earneſtneſs* did he enforce them? *If there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort* Phil. ii.
of Love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any ---1.
Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be ---2.
like-minded, *having the* ſame Love, *being of* one Accord, *of* one Mind.

And may I not beg leave, tho not with the *Authority*, yet, with the *Charity* of St. *Paul*, to apply all this to thoſe unhappy *Diviſions* that at this day rend in pieces the Church of Chriſt among us, and beſeech you, by all theſe endearing Conſiderations, to purſue thoſe things which may make for our *Peace*, and for the cloſing of thoſe *breaches*, which the malice of our *Enemies* too ſucceſsfully begun, and our own *weakneſſe* has too fatally kept up among us.

Never, certainly, was there a time, ſince our *Diviſions* firſt began, in which we had greater reaſon to conſider of ſuch an *Union*; or, I hope, a fairer opportunity to promiſe our ſelves an Accompliſhment of it. Only let us all be as careful to improve it, as I am perſwaded

we

we have all of us not only ſeem'd to deſire, but have indeed earneſtly long'd for it.

Let us ſhew the ſenſe we have of that wonderful *Deliverance* God has given us out of the *hand* of our *Enemies*, by *uniting* our ſelves in the ſtricteſt League of *Friendſhip* with one another.

Hitherto we have defended our *Church* by our *Arguments*; let us now by our *Charity* ſettle and eſtabliſh it, againſt the like *Dangers* for the time to come.

This will indeed render both our *ſelves* and our *Religion* Glorious to the World; and may be a Happy *Augury* that the *bleſſed time* ſo long wrapped up in *ſacred Prophecy*, is indeed now ready to be revealed: When the *Church of Chriſt* being purged from thoſe *Corruptions* that have ſo long defaced its Beauty, ſhall again appear in its *primitive Purity*. When all *Hereſie* and *Schiſm* being every where aboliſhed, and the *Myſtery of Iniquity* laid fully open, and the *Man of Sin* deſtroy'd; true Religion and ſincere Piety ſhall again reign throughout the World; *God*
Rev. xxi. 3. *himſelf ſhall pitch his Tabernacle among us, and dwell with us; and we ſhall be his People, and he ſhall be our God.*

O bleſſed

O Blessed State of the Church Militant here on Earth! the glorious Antipast of that Peace and Piety which *God* has prepared for his *Church Triumphant* in *Heaven!* Who would not wish to see those days, when a general *Reformation*, and a true *Zeal*, and a *perfect Charity*, passing through the World, we should All be united in the same *Faith*, the same *Worship*, the same *Communion* and *Fellowship*, one with another? When all *Pride* and *Prejudice*, all *Interests* and *Designs* being submitted to the Honour of God, and the discharge of our Duty, the *Holy Scriptures* shall again triumph over the vain *Traditions* of Men, and *Religion* no longer take its denomination from little *Sects* and *Factions*, but we shall all be content with the same common primitive *Names* of *Christians* and *Brethren*, and live together as becomes our Character, in *Brotherly Love* and *Christian Charity* with one another?

And who can tell but such a *Change* as this, and which we have otherwise some reason to believe is nigh at hand, may even now break forth from the midst of us, would we but all seriously labour to perfect the Great Work which the Providence of God has so gloriously begun amongst us, and establish that *Love* and

Unity

Unity among our ſelves, which may afterwards diffuſe it ſelf from us into all the other parts of the *Chriſtian World* beſides?

But however, whether we ſhall even ſee, I do not ſay, ſuch a Bleſſed *Effect* as this, but even any good Effect at all of our Endeavours here on *Earth*, or no; yet this we are ſure, we ſhall not loſe our Reward in *Heaven*. When to have contributed, tho in the leaſt degree, to the healing of thoſe *Diviſions* we ſo unhappily labour under, ſhall be eſteemed a greater Honour, than to have *ſilenced* all the Cavils of our *Enemies*, and even to have pray'd, and wiſh'd for it, and, where we could not any otherwiſe have contributed our ſelves, but to have exhorted others to it, ſhall be rewarded with *Bleſſings, more than all the Stars in the Firmament for number.*

Now the God of patience and conſolation, grant you to be like-minded *one towards another, according to* Chriſt Jeſus: *That ye may with* one mind, *and* one mouth, *glorifie* God, *even the Father of our* Lord Jeſus Chriſt: To Him be *Honour* and *Praiſe* for *ever* and *ever*. Amen.

FINIS.

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